WHIRRAKEE

July 2016

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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE BENDIGO FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

Bendigo Field Naturalists Club Inc.

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Office Bearers for 2015 - 2016

President	*vacant*	
Vice President	Alistair White	0419 613 737
Secretary/Public Officer	Matt Comer	0409 162 627
Treasurer	Ben Goonan	

Positions delegated by the Committee

Minute Secretary	Anne Bridley (for general meetings)	
Excursion sub-committee	**John Lindner**, Simon Hay, Richard Goonan	**5448 3406**
Syllabus organiser	Ben Goonan	
Librarian	Jess Milroy	
Garden sub-committee	Kerrie Norris, Jess Milroy	
Observations coordinator	Jenny Shield	
Supper coordinators	Alistair White, Jess Milroy	
Hall management sub-committee	**Maurie Lewis**, Rob & Glenise Moors, Ben Goonan	**0407427179**
Whirrakee sub-committee	Sabine Wilkens, Alistair White, John McCallum, Ben Goonan	
Whirrakee contact/editor	Sabine Wilkens e-mail: s.wilkens@latrobe.edu.au	5443 2797
Whirrakee mailing coordinator	Jenny Shield	
Website sub-committee	Ben Goonan, **John McCallum**	**54439347**
Bullying and Harassment Officer	Simon Hay	0410 424 686

Membership of the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club is open to all those interested in Natural History. The subscription rates are: Single $40; Family $50; Concession: Single $35; Family $40. *Whirrakee* subscription only is $40.

General meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month. The venue for General meetings is the Golden Square Hall, Old High Street, Golden Square. The meeting starts with members sharing their recent natural history observations. The invited speaker starts at 8:00pm and meetings conclude with supper. The Annual Meeting is held in September.

Committee meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month at 5:30pm. Members of the Committee are the Office Bearer listed above and the following members: Devi Shanty, Simon Hay, John McCallum, Richard Goonan, Karen Thomas, Jess Milroy

Excursions are conducted regularly and are advertised on the diary page of the *Whirrakee*. The assembly point for excursions is the Golden Square Hall, unless otherwise specified. Several interclub field naturalist campouts are held every year.

The Bendigo Field Naturalists Club is actively involved in local conservation issues. An **indigenous garden** has been established around the Golden Square Hall. Working bees are advertised on the *Whirrakee* diary page.

Bird Observing: Club members conduct regular bird surveys. Please contact Anne Bridley 5442 6188 or Glenise Moors 5439 6254 for details. Special bird observations should be reported to Anne Bridley 5442 6188. To propose bird observing excursions please contact Kerrie Norris 5447 8017.

WHIRRAKEE

Monthly Newsletter of the Bendigo Field Naturalist Club
Vol. 37, No. 6, July 2016
Whirrakee takes its name from the Whirrakee Wattle (*Acacia williamsonii*), which is virtually endemic to the Bendigo region

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Authors are responsible for the accuracy of the information they use and also for any opinions expressed in their articles. Contributions should be posted or e-mailed to the editor at least two days prior to the last Wednesday of the month. They will be included as soon as possible after they are received, although space restrictions occasionally require shortening of articles or holding them over till the following edition of *Whirrakee*.
Articles in *Whirrakee* may be reproduced, but permission should be obtained from the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club, and acknowledgment should be given to the author and the Club. Some back issues are still available on request.

Editor's Note
With the late autumn rain, the landscape has certainly changed dramatically over the last few weeks. Some people might think that field naturalists stay home in cold and wet conditions, but no... they go out and play with fungi! There is plenty of evidence of it in the photo pages this month, with some strange and rare fungi as well as some in psychedelic colours – a feast for the eyes. On page 3 of this edition is an appeal by the committee for members to start thinking about the Annual General Meetin,g which is in September. Please give this some consideration.

Front page photograph: Surprising visitor in Spring Gully around lunchtime on May 29
by Simon Smith
Our back garden is surrounded by houses, and is fairly open – so I was amazed to see a raptor with freshly-killed prey (a Crested Pigeon?). I managed to take a couple of photos before the bird flew off with its prey. The consensus is that the raptor is a Brown Goshawk, and not the very similar Collared Sparrowhawk. In our 23 years in suburban Spring Gully, I've never seen a Goshawk (perhaps I haven't looked in the right places), but we've certainly never had one in our garden!

Short Notes

BFNC Wild Weekly Walks – Nature Knowledge Exchange
Excursions, 9am-12pm Saturdays
Meet at 8:50am at the Golden Square Hall to attend. Please carry with you some water and a light snack, along with clothing suitable for the prevailing conditions. Walks will be short and of easy to moderate difficulty, suitable for anyone with a basic level of fitness.
The indicative locations for excursions in July are the following:
July 2 (Wellsford), July 9 (Whipstick)
July 16 (Kamarooka), July 23 (Shelbourne)
July 30 (Spring Gully)

Call Richard on 0423418815 or email richard.goonan@optusnet.com.au to find out more or check the club's website at http://www.bendigofieldnaturalists.asn.au for the latest updates.

Naturalist Workshops
Throughout the year the Club has been running a series of Naturalist Workshops specifically designed to develop participants' proficiency across a broad range of field based naturalist skills and knowledge. They are designed to cater for a wide range of abilities and use a participatory/ interactive model, where participants learn from one another in a friendly and welcoming environment.

Workshop 9: 'Waxflowers of Bendigo'
Presenter: Matt Comer
Date: 27th July
Time: 7:00pm, Golden Square Hall
RSVP: Please register your interest via info@bendigofieldnaturalists.asn.au or by post to PO Box 396 Bendigo VIC 3552.
What to bring: Enthusiasm! A hand-magnifier and images if you have any, your field guides and notes, paper and pen, your laptop or phone to use apps, etc.
More information:
www.bendigofieldnaturalists.asn.au or info@bendigofieldnaturalists.asn.au

Recording Naturalist Oral Histories
In association with the upcoming exhibition - *Menagerie: animals in Bendigo history*, 26 August 2016 - 12 February 2017 at the Post Office Gallery, curator Clare Needham is working closely with ABC Open Central Victoria to record oral histories for potential inclusion in the exhibition. These could include club members talking about their experience of watching/tracking native animals in the area over time. They could mention a few species in detail or changes they have noticed, a specific project they have worked on to regenerate habitat, or a focus on a specific unique species in the area and its importance. The format will involve a relaxed conversation with producer Jane Curtis about their personal experience. Please call Richard Goonan on 0423 418815 or email him at richard.goonan@optusnet.com.au, if you are interested to find out more.

The committee would like to highlight to club members that our AGM is coming up in September and it is time to begin considering the positions of office bearers, committee members and appointed roles within the club. Whilst members are always able to nominate at the AGM, we would be aiming to have nominations finalised as much as possible before the AGM to ensure the meeting runs efficiently. A nomination form will appear in the August *Whirrakee* and should be returned to the secretary as soon as possible before the AGM. We hope you will consider how you can best serve our wonderful club.

BFNC 70th Anniversary year celebration mug. As part of the 70th Anniversary year celebrations, the committee developed a new BFNC mug. Our new mug features the Club's floral emblem – Fairy Waxflower, *Philotheca verrucosus*, and is printed on quality Bendigo Pottery ware. Members are most welcome to purchase mugs, at cost, if they wish. If you are interested, please order via PO Box 396 Bendigo VIC 3552, or e-mail info@bendigofieldnaturalists.asn.au
Mugs are $20.00 each (see photo on page 7)

Above: *Grifola colensoi*,

Right: *Fomitopsis lilacinogilva*

Below: *Chlorociboria aeruginascens*,

Fungal excursion to Mt Alexander (by Joy Clusker)
The three fungi (above and left) were found at the top, while the *Russula* below was at the Oak forest.

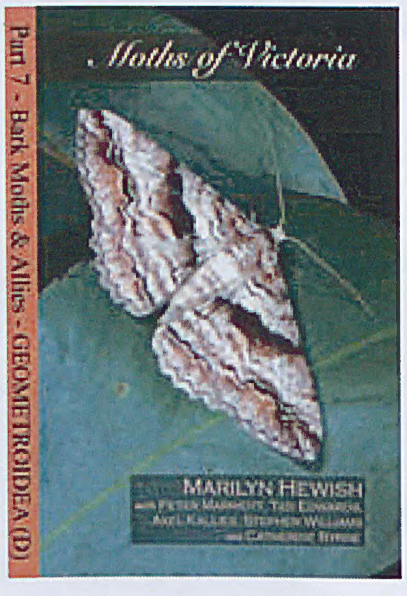
the *Grifola* was quite a find, Richard had found some at the summit earlier, but by the time I saw them, the Wallabies had had a feed.
It was a great day with 16 adults and 4 kids, lovely weather and lots of fungi.

Below: *Russula persanguinea* at the Oak forest

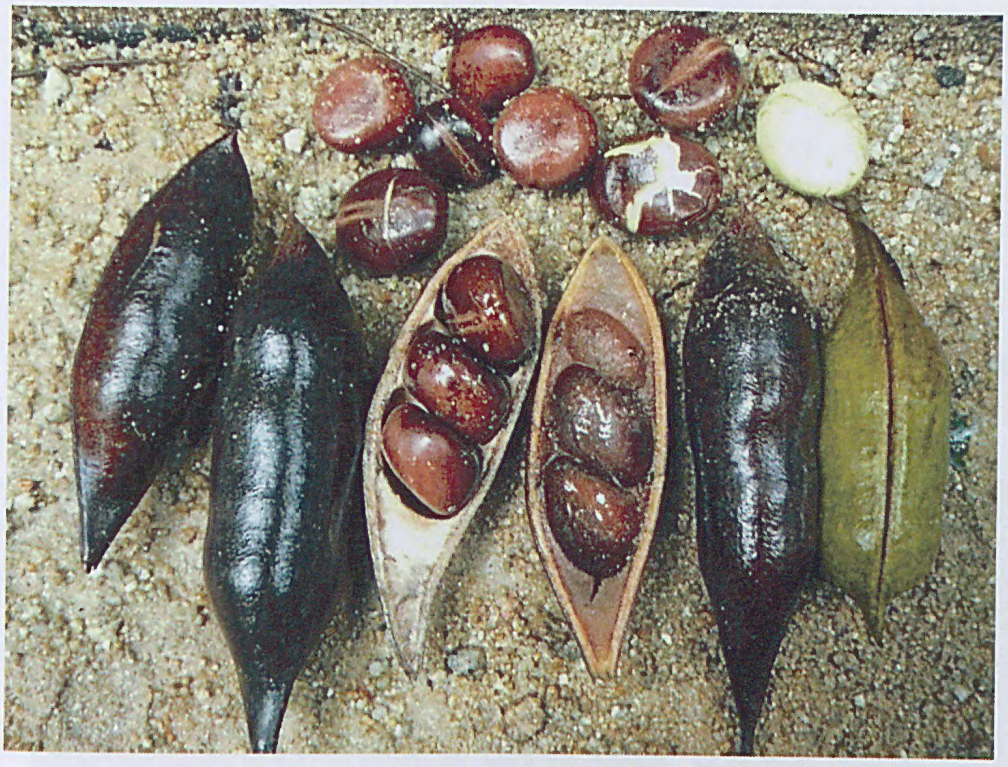
Above: Karen Thomas took this photo in One Tree Hill on June 2nd while doing nest box maintenance; 'these 2 tuans were not distracted by our presence which left us pondering as to the activity?' Could they be mating or just sleeping on top of each other?

The newly designed BFNC mug
(see page 3 how to get one)

Right: the latest 'Moths of Victoria is now available
(see page 10)



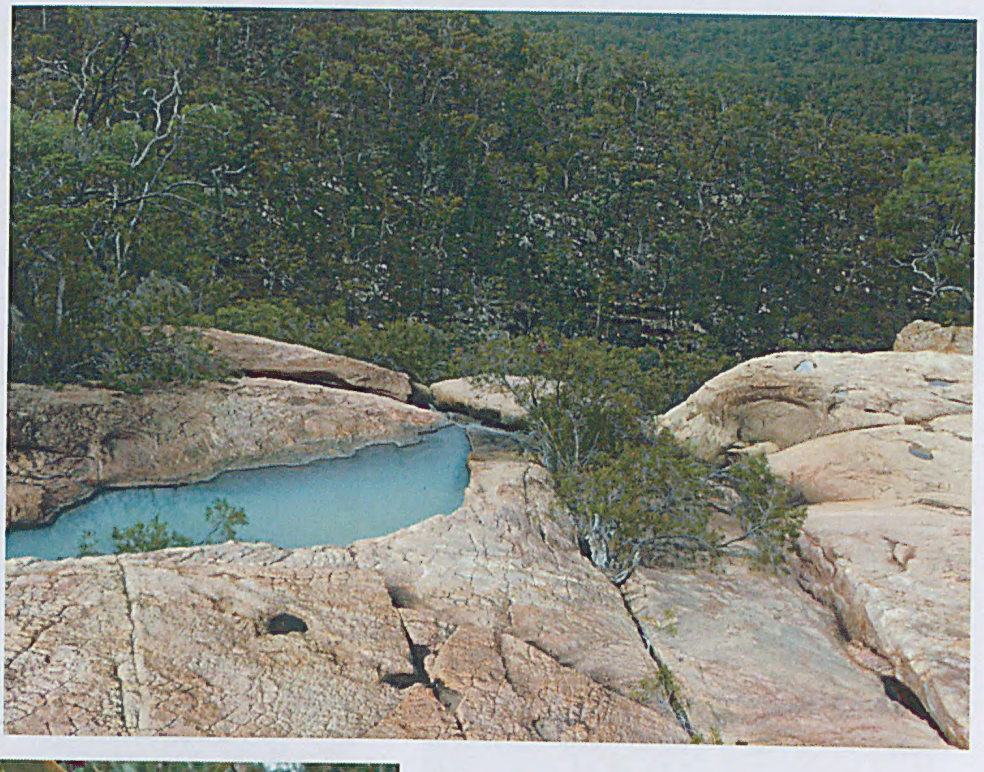
Below: Urn Health, *Melichrus urceolatus*, from the walk at White Hills, see article on page 9 (photographer: Richard Goonan)



Travelling to Queensland and Cape York Part 2 by John Lindner

Black Bean (*Castanospermum australe*) is a large rainforest tree, a legume in the Fabaceae family. On the Mamu Rainforest Walk, out of Innisfail, you could only see the trunk, but the ground beneath was littered with huge pods – some green, some ripe and some split open to reveal the large seeds.

Around Herberton where Don Franklin lives (a member of the club many years ago), Don took us to the spectacular Mowbray Falls off the Mount Misery Ridge, a granite range. Since it had been raining recently, there was some flow, but not the muddy water of the lowlands.
The water shed from granite is slightly milky with clay. The whole surface of the falls has been scrubbed absolutely clean by past floods.



Broad-leaved Paperbark (*Melaleuca viridiflora*) on the track into Mowbray Falls.
The leaves are thick, stiff, dark green and have 6 veins. We expect to see a lot of this tree on Cape York. The luxuriant growth and flowers are a contrast to Melaleucas at home.

When it's cold and wet, field naturalists have fun with fungi

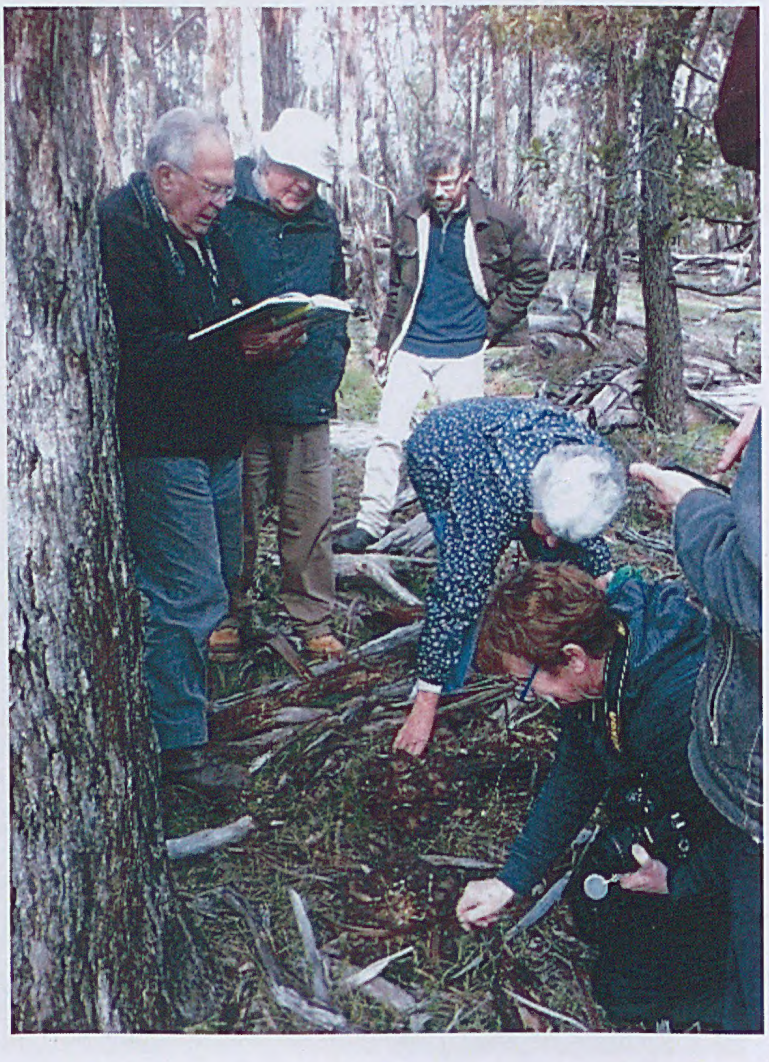
Here are a few rare and interesting specimens described in Ray Wallace's article on page 8 (who was also the photographer). Check it out, to see what detective work went on to identify these.

Tricholoma colossus

Leptoporus mollis

Left and below left: *Agaricus deserticola*

Field-natting for fungi at the excursion to Mt Alexander on June 19 (photo from Matt Comer)



Three rare fungi for the Bendigo region

by Ray Wallace

Autumn had almost come and gone for 2016 without any rain. The first 10 days of June however brought welcome relief. The fungi enthusiasts among us set out into the nearby parks, gardens and bushland with renewed optimism for finding new species and re-meeting old friends.

The fungi fruited with enthusiasm. Amongst a multitude emerged three rare species both on a local level and nationally. Two of them were discovered in the old former Eaglehawk State School pine plantation, both species being associated with pines. In this case *Pinus radiata*.

The first *Leptoporus mollis,* was found by Michael Barkla and myself growing on an old felled pine log (see photo on page 5). This is a beautiful, soft, pink bracket fungi with elongated pores. A European species, it was last seen in Great Britain in 1957 and was presumed to be extinct until rediscovered in Scotland in 1996. There have been a handful of records for Australia.

About the same time, in the first half of June, Michael discovered a large robust agaric measuring 25 cm across. It was a puzzling species and yet its large size limited the options to what it could be. The large brown pileus (cap) contrasted pleasingly with its white gills. Assuming it to be an exotic species because of its association with pines, Joy Clusker and I perused what we could of the European and American field guides and identified it as *Tricholoma colossus* (see photo on page 5). Its habit in the pine plantation was as the literature stated, growing in small clumps. The European guides all refer to it as rare.

The third species was a different kettle of fish altogether and was found off Camp road at Kamarooka on a sandy rise. It too was initially a puzzle for all of those who observed it. On Saturday 11 June 2016 I discovered a group of 30 or so most unusual fungi. They looked like giant stalked puffballs measuring up to 10 cm across with a 10-12 cm in length stipe. Yet they could not be puffballs because they possessed a very pronounced partial veil. Instead of gills they possessed a black spore mass when the veil was broken. It then appeared as if they were some sort of aberrant primitive *Agaricus* on some evolutionary path either backward or forward, somehow related to the strange gastroid fungi which contains relatives of *Cortinarius* and *Agaricus*.

It was back to the books for Joy and I, and initially we thought it may have been *Endoptychum agaricoides*, the description of the spore mass seemed spot on, but the shape and stipe were all wrong. On perusing David Arora's brilliant book *Mushrooms Demystified* it became apparent that what we had been looking at was the Texan Desert Mushroom, *Agaricus deserticola*. It is found in the arid lands of America and Mexico (see photo on page 5). It is a long way from Texas to Kamarooka, but further research revealed that there have been 16 Australian records, but all of them far north of Bendigo. The partial veil of *Agaricus deserticola* never opens and spore dispersal is only effected when the pileus erodes away and the remaining spore mass is dispersed by wind as in a lot of puffballs.

It has long been the view that Bendigo has been the border between northern and southern species of birds, eg. The White-backed and the Black-backed forms of the Australian Magpie. The two species of Heath Wren are another case in point.

So here we have two rare temperate species and a desert species meeting in the same region. I wonder if our fungi repeat the same distribution traits as the birds and this too is a fungal border between the temperate and arid.

White Hills: Saturday naturalist walk 23rd April by Richard Goonan

After reading an informative two-part article titled 'Ferns of Bendigo' by Eric Whiting, published in the September and October editions of *Whirrakee* from 1986, I decided it was about time (30 years on) to revisit the White Hills and search for a couple of the fern species referred to in the article. Eric's article also notes that the Club's 'Botany Group' visited the area in 1985, but unfortunately I couldn't find any other reference about this excursion. The White Hills area also holds many childhood memories for me, as I grew up near there and explored around the hills learning many of the local plant species. When planning the weekly naturalist walks I remembered how interesting the area is and realised that despite the dry start to autumn there would be plenty to occupy a naturalist's interest.

As the group entered the area, the first species of note was *Eucalyptus goniocalyx* (Long-leaf Box). This species is found scattered in relatively small patches to the south and east of Bendigo and often occurs in association with areas of Heathy Woodland (EVC 48). Characteristic features of this species include the flattened shape of the flower/fruit stem (peduncle), and the slight vertical ridges on the mature seed capsules. The closely related species *Eucalyptus nortonii* can be distinguished by its more glaucous branches, buds and fruit.
Locally uncommon, *Melichrus urceolatus* (Urn Heath) is a particular feature of the vegetation community at White Hills. Although many mature (long lived) specimens occur and still appear healthy (see photo on page 7), a number of these have died. Few (if any) seedling recruits were found and monitoring changes in the population will be important over the coming years to know if these long lived plants are beginning to senesce. A better understanding of the process required to trigger seed germination will be needed to ensure the site is managed to maintain this species along with the other Heath species present such as *Brachyloma daphnoides* (Daphne Heath), *Astroloma humifusum* (Cranberry Heath), *Leucopogon virgatus* (Common Beard-heath), and *Leucopogon rufus* (Ruddy Beard-heath). During the morning we found several specimens of Urn Heath flowering abundantly, a pleasant surprise for an early autumn wildflower.
With such a dry autumn, it was fortunate for the group the find both *Corunastylis despectans* (Midge Orchid) and *Eriochilus cucullatus* (Parsons Bands) flowering. With its tiny dark maroon coloured flower the Midge Orchid is always hard to see at first. The Parsons Bands were about a third of their potential height when growing in a wetter autumn, and few plants of either species were seen.

The group observed several birds during the morning. One Black-shouldered Kite was seen hovering nearby, and seven Fork-tailed kites were circling high in the distance further west. Within the reserve, we watched one male Red-capped Robin actively hunting atop a thick bundle of Dodder-laurel. When younger, I regularly found Tawny-crowned Honeyeater in the Heathland remnants around White Hills and it was pleasing to see this species still in the area with one seen during the morning. The Tawny-crowned honeyeater can be recognised by its habit of repeatedly singing from a perch in the top of a tall shrub. A small group of White-backed Swallows were seen flying overhead. As the group was finishing our walk, we noticed a male Flame Robin among a small patch of Long Leaf Box. Fortunately we got excellent views and were able to clearly identify its characteristic features for everybody in the group to see.

Making our way slowly through the area, we were able to locate two unusual records of fern species referred to in Eric's article, *Hypolepis rugulosa* (Ground Fern) and *Asplenium flabellifolium* (Necklace Fern). These ferns have taken advantage of the crevices left by past mining activities where a micro climate is supported that protects them from summer heat and desiccation. The origin of these plants is unknown, are they self-propagated from spores dispersed by wind or

have they been deliberately/accidently introduced? It seems that the presence of ferns in this area has been known for a long time. An historical article found by Carol and Bill Holsworth from the Bendigo Advertiser (1874) describes a wide variety of fern species found growing at that time in the White Hills.

The following observations were also of interest during the excursion. A large (old) specimen of *Melicytus dentatus* (Tree Violet) was found. This species is more readily associated with areas of volcanic soils such as around Redesdale and as isolated records from the northern extremities of volcanic flows near Barnadown. Like the ferns, its origin is also unknown (seed possibly dispersed by birds?).

The hot and dry summer seems to have reduced the abundance of some weeds in the area, killing many of the mature *Chrysanthemoides monilifera* (Bone Seed) plants. This weed can proliferate on this soil type, but will now be growing mainly as seedlings for the next few years when germination is triggered again. The hard seeds appear capable of long term persistence, so the species has not disappeared totally just yet. Perhaps this natural decline presents an opportunity for some effective targeted weeding in coming years?
Unlike most other vegetation communities in the region, *Acacia pycnantha* (Golden Wattle) is far less common on this geology but does occur occasionally. On one small Golden Wattle, the group observed *Iridomyrmex purpureus* (Red Meat Ant) tending the juvenile grubs of a Eurymelidae Leafhopper. The bright orange eggs, covering sections of the wattle stem attracted our attention; upon closer inspection newly hatched juveniles could be seen, along with slightly larger grubs and a small number of sub-adult nymphs.

Weekly Saturday naturalist walks have been running through autumn and continue with an exciting list of local areas to visit through winter and spring, see page 3 and the club website for further details.

Summary of Committee business from the meeting of 15 June 2016.

New and on-going business included the following items.

- There will be a need for some follow-up maintenance of the Club garden following the Peter Ellis memorial planting. This should be minimal and could be accomplished by the occasional working bee (keep an eye on Whirrakee for date's tbc).
- Following a meeting with representatives of the Friends of the O'Keefe Rail Trail BFNC have agreed to contribute information about plants, animals and geological features that trail users might be likely to encounter. This will be incorporated into signage situated along the Trail. There is an opportunity to provide more detailed information to be included on a web-site which would be accessible to Trail users via QR codes or URLs.
- Committee is investigating printing and binding the recently published eBook, *Fungi in Australia* (produced by the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria), to be held in the club library or members use.
- The CoGB will be approached about installing a bike stand at the hall.

A new moth publication
(see photo on page 7)
The latest Moths of Victoria (MoV) is now published and available. MoV7 completes the large family of Geometridae. It covers the second half of the subfamily Ennominae. Marilyn Hewish has headed that team and meticulously sorted through those sometimes confusing bark moths. As usual there are many useful hints about telling species apart; Steve Williams has raised quite a few of the caterpillars; A wide range of talented photographers have supplied many beautiful images.
An order form can be obtained from Matt or Sabine or http://entsocvic.org.au/?page_id=52

Diary

All Club meetings are held at the Golden Square Hall, Old High St Golden Square, unless otherwise indicated.

Wednesday, 13th July 7.30pm
Dr John Morgan (School of Life Sciences, Department of Ecology, Environment and evolution, La Trobe University) will talk about 'Using historical data to interpret vegetation changes in the Victorian alps'
All are welcome, the meeting room is always warm and cosy...

Excursions

New regular Saturday excursion activities
Contact Richard on 0423418815 or email richard.goonan@oprtusnet.com.au
The indicative locations for excursions in July are the following: July 2 (Wellsford), July 9 (Whipstick) July 16 (Kamarooka), July 23 (Shelbourne) July 30 (Spring Gully)
See page 3 for what to bring and more details

Regular Fauna Excursions
Every Friday morning starting at around 9 to 9:30 the Fauna Group inspects nest boxes in the Spring Gully area. The excursions are led by Maurie Lewis, 16 Vains St. Golden Square. Phone Maurie (0407 427 179) to confirm exact departure times and location. If you don't phone and go directly to Maurie's house and find nobody at the house between 9 and 9:30, then the excursion is not on.

BFNC Workshop, 27th July 7.00pm
Workshop 9: "Waxflowers of Bendigo". Leader: Matt Comer. People could bring a hand magnifier and any relevant field guides.
See page 3.

Bendigo Native Plant Group meeting.
All interested people are welcome to come along. Meeting starts at 7:30pm on the third Tuesday of the month, Golden Square Hall.
The next meeting is on the 19th July.

Family Nature Club
The Nature Club activities will continue in 2016, so look out for announcements or check out their website. **Registration:**
Bendigonatureclub@gmail.com or 5443-1326
http://bendigofamilynatureclub.blogspot.com.au

Wildlife Rescue & Information Network Inc.
W.R.I.N. is an organisation dedicated to the care of orphaned, sick or injured native animals. It is fully endorsed by the Dept of Sustainability and Environment.
Please call our Emergency Number for Help for Fauna in Need. Phone: 0419 356433.
WRIN meetings held on the 1st Saturday of February, April, June, August, October and December at 1pm the Golden Square Hall

Wildlife Apps

By John Mcallum

Here are a few apps that you can download to your tablet or smart phone.

Morecombe's *Birds of Australia* is a spin-off from his book. As well as pictures, distribution maps and other information it includes calls for most species and costs about $30.00

If you haven't already got it, Museum Victoria's *Field Guide to Victorian Fauna* has a good representative collection of pictures of vertebrates and invertebrates. It includes calls for frogs and is free to download.

A recent appearance is Bird Life Australia's *Wetland Birds*. It covers 63 non-passerine birds that might be encountered in wetlands in Tasmania, Victoria and South Australia. Each entry includes good notes to aid identification, a number of recorded calls, a map of verified records for the whole of Australia and a link to Birdlife Australia's profile for the species. There is also a size reference silhouette against outlines of what look like a raven and a flycatcher of some sort. It too is free to download.